

UPF and WFWP France Seminar Probes Origins of Conflict, Hope for Peace

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Paris, France - Despite the two wars now raging in Europe and the Middle East, people still hope "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war," as the United Nations states in its Preamble. Hence, UPF-France and the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) hosted a symposium on the theme, "All People Become Brethren," at the Paris Peace Embassy on June 8, 2024.

This title was chosen to honor the 200th anniversary of Beethoven's ninth symphony, which was first performed in 1824. It is famous for the Ode to Joy; the original poem, written by German poet Friedrich Schiller, is translated as:



Thy magic binds again What custom strictly divided; All people become brethren Where thy gentle wing abides.

The event also celebrated two events, one past, one future. It marked the 80th anniversary of the Normandy landings carried out on June 6, 1944, in which Allied forces landed on French beaches and went on to defeat the occupying Nazi regime. Finally, it heralded the Olympic Games that will open in Paris on July 26.



Archetypes for conflict and reconciliation

Mr. Axel Huard of UPF-France explained the biblical account of Cain and Abel as the archetype for humanity's history of struggle, war and conflict. He noted that Pope Francis often refers to Cain and Abel in this context, and French psychiatrist Gérard Haddad wrote a book titled, "The Cain Complex: Terrorism, Hatred of Others and Sibling Rivalry." In his presentation, Mr. Huard contrasted the relationship between biblical siblings Cain and Abel with that of Jacob and Esau, who represent a model of reconciliation.

In the following presentation, Mr. Didier Guignard, director of the Paris Science Club, quoted St. Augustine, who in his book "The City of God" wrote: "Two loves built two cities - the earthly, which is built up by the love of self to the contempt of God, and the heavenly, which is built up by the love of God to the contempt of self." He correlated these to the rise of Hebraism, which he described as an "Abel-type" worldview, and Hellenism, a "Cain-type" worldview.

During the luncheon that followed the morning sessions, Mr. Cheikh Amadou Ba, president of the National Council of Imams in France, was appointed as an ambassador for peace.

Switzerland's democracy and neutrality

The afternoon session focused on Switzerland. Dr. Laurent Ladouce, director of the Centre for Culture and Peace in Paris, explained the roots of the Swiss model of governance, in light of the ideals of interdependence, mutual prosperity and universal values.

Amb. Jean-Pierre Vettovaglia, former ambassador of Switzerland to the Francophone countries, warned of the need to be realistic, pointing out, "We don't live in a world of Care Bears. The neutrality of Switzerland and its democracy are under attack nowadays." The issue arises with regard to Switzerland's adoption of European Union sanctions against Russia, which some people feel violates the country's neutrality.

The debate was followed by a reception, during which the ambassador listened to the African delegates and shared his own insights, based on his experience in diplomacy and business.